Spinal Stenosis

Legs go heavy when you walk, better leaning forward

Tips from your physiotherapist at Ace Sports Medicine

ACE SPORTS MEDICINE
UPPER MOUNT GRAVATT

The canal in the lower back that carries the nerves to the legs narrows with age. When it crowds the nerves, walking and standing bring on heavy, achy or numb legs, and sitting or leaning forward relieves them. The scan finding is common. The symptoms are not.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT SPINAL STENOSIS

1 WHAT IT IS

Age-related narrowing of the canal in the lower back. Discs flatten, joints enlarge and ligaments thicken, and the space around the nerves shrinks.

NARROWING, NOT DAMAGE.

2 THE PATTERN

Legs go heavy, achy, numb or weak after walking or standing, and settle within minutes of sitting or bending forward. Many people have little back pain.

THE LEGS TELL THE STORY.

3 SCAN VS SYMPTOMS

In a study of 938 adults, 77.9 percent had at least moderate narrowing on MRI, but only 17.5 percent of those with severe narrowing had symptoms. Symptomatic stenosis affected 9.3 percent.

THE REPORT DESCRIBES YOUR SPINE, NOT YOUR FUTURE.

4 THE TROLLEY EFFECT

Leaning forward opens the canal. That is why the shopping trolley, the exercise bike and walking uphill feel better, and standing in a queue feels worse.

FLEXION HELPS. USE IT.

5 PHYSIO OR SURGERY

In a trial of 169 people who were all surgical candidates, a structured physiotherapy programme matched surgery on physical function at two years.

A PROPER PROGRAMME COMES FIRST.

6 WHAT HELPS

Flexion-based exercise, hip and trunk strength, walking and cycling below your symptom threshold, then building the distance, plus practical strategies for outings.

BUILD THE DISTANCE GRADUALLY.

BEEN HANDED A SCAN REPORT?

Most people over 60 have narrowing on a scan and most have no symptoms from it. What matters is how far you can walk, what stops you and what brings you back. A spine assessment puts the report next to what your legs are actually doing.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

- Walking distance shrinking over months
- Legs the reason you stop, not your breathing
- Walk further pushing a trolley than upright
- A scan report you are unsure about
- URGENT: new bowel or bladder change or saddle numbness
- URGENT: rapidly worsening leg weakness, fever or weight loss

The two urgent items need same-day medical care.

WHAT CAN A PHYSIO DO?

- Confirm the pattern and measure your walking tolerance
- Build a flexion-based programme around your threshold
- Strengthen hips, buttocks and trunk
- Coach the trolley lean, walking pole and seat plan
- Progress walking and cycling distance
- Link you with exercise physiology and Better Bones and Balance

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

If your legs go heavy when you walk:

Walk in short bouts | **Use the exercise bike** | **Lean forward or sit early** | **Book a spine assessment**

This is general information. Please discuss specifics at an appointment.

Helping You Perform at Your Best

ACE Sports Medicine | Upper Mount Gravatt

90 Klumpp Rd, Upper Mount Gravatt QLD 4122

07 3349 5733 | admin@acesportsmedicine.com.au

Need support with spinal stenosis?

Book your appointment today

acesportsmedicine.com.au